

TEAM ENABLER

Getting Civil Affairs, Tactical Psychological Operations and Human Intelligence Collection into the Fight

CAPTAIN DAVID J. SMITH AND FIRST LIEUTENANT JEFFREY RITTER

The current operational environment (OE) in Iraq is more dynamic than ever as we work to transition lines of operation (LOO) such as security and governance to the government of Iraq. Units must have the ability to conduct full spectrum operations (FSO) across their entire area of operations (AO). Battalion and brigade-sized organizations are challenged by the numerous tasks associated with providing security to the local populace, creating effective government systems that work within the government of Iraq structure, providing or improving essential services, creating enduring employment, and bolstering the local economy. Combining attachments such as Civil Affairs teams (CAT-A), tactical Psychological Operations teams (TPT), and human intelligence

collection teams (HCT) into a cohesive, separate maneuver element under command and control of the battalion allows units to attack problem sets across all LOO. Our unit — the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, which is part of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division — formed an element called Team Enabler that combined these capabilities during the execution of FSO in the Mada'in Qada (southeast of Baghdad) during Operation Iraqi Freedom V.

Team Enabler allows line companies/troops and platoons to focus on the security LOO and the critical tasks of securing the local population from extremist elements and preventing sectarian violence. Team Enabler supplements traditional combat forces by providing a venue to build initial trust and relationships with local civil and

tribal leaders. This is accomplished through combined spheres of influence (SOI) engagements with maneuver or “ground-owning” commanders and focused efforts to improve local government organizations and essential services. Within a few months of implementing the Team Enabler concept, 3-1 CAV saw a visible improvement and an increase in trust between Coalition forces (CF) and the Iraqi population.

Building or improving Iraqi government institutions is critical to the success of our mission in Iraq. The Team Enabler organization allows units to not just conduct SOIs with leaders, but to devote the time necessary to building and improving government structure and efficiency. CAT-As are experts in assisting civil leaders in making community improvements using existing government structures and promoting efficiency in execution of basic governance tasks. They also provide the support channels to coordinate directly between brigade-level partners at the Qada level and Iraqi provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) that coordinate efforts with the Iraqi provincial and national government. This partnership allows maneuver commanders to focus on establishing security and keeping pressure on extremist elements who may try to disrupt CF and government of Iraq efforts. Team Enabler was successful in developing a quick win project plan along Butler Range Road, a key line of communication (LOC) connecting the entire BCT with logistics support from division and corps, that resulted in significant improvement in the quantity and quality of drinking water for several villages by utilizing water delivery contracts and drilling artesian wells. This rapid and visible improvement created a relationship with local leaders and citizens



Photos by SGT Timothy Kingston

A Soldier with the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, visits with some Iraqi children after members of the unit gave a local school 200 backpacks for its students.



A medic from the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment wraps an Iraqi boy's wrist during a medical civic action program operation in Narhwan, Iraq, October 8, 2007.

that greatly enhanced the security environment along that vital LOC. TPTs are able to conduct aggressive Information Operations (IO) campaigns that are focused on building support for local government institutions and agendas as they begin the process of “winning the hearts and minds” by reducing popular support for extremist elements. HCT teams provide units with information that allow for the accurate targeting of high value individuals (HVI) through this close working relationship with local leaders. During multiple operations, the HCT team embedded with Team Enabler was able to engage and develop sources that provided significant intelligence on squadron targets. This information was in turn used to kill or capture extremist leaders and greatly reduce the security threat to Coalition forces and local citizens. The synergistic effect of the reduced security threat encouraged locals to open up to Team Enabler and the HCT and provide further useful information. Multiple tailgate medical operations (MEDOPs) and larger medical civic action program (MEDCAP) operations involving Iraqi doctors and medicines provided by the Ministry of Health were particularly effective operations. These operations, along with water and school supply drops, provided opportunities for the HCT to engage local citizens in a secure environment without endangering themselves or their sources.

Providing essential services, creating enduring employment, and building the local economy are key tasks that Team Enabler has the greatest ability to affect. CAT-As,

through project development and prioritization, identify what is needed to achieve the desired effects of the unit and the local government. CAT-As have trained individuals within their team organization to provide the right amount of knowledge, time and energy to properly develop economic near and long term plans within an area of operations. Additionally, this relieves maneuver commanders at the company/troop and platoon level from having to provide combat power to escort these teams. It also allows a singular focus by an entity on achieving “visible improvement” throughout their AO. TPTs are able to collect atmospherics and determine the problem areas in which projects are necessary to deny extremists sanctuary and safe haven. They are also able to determine if a unit is achieving its effects on a population over time. HCT teams once again are able to provide information on extremists in an area through a nonthreatening environment. We have found that information is sometimes easier to collect by a Team Enabler organization utilizing the “carrot” instead of the “stick,” which validates the HCT being apart of Team Enabler.

Team Enabler was extraordinarily successful at making connections with local citizens that sometimes the more kinetically oriented combat forces were unable to make. In one instance, the team made enormous progress in the small village of Hollandia by securing medical treatment for the son of one of the citizens. Ahaip, a 3-year-old boy, was born with a birth defect that caused his intestines to be outside his body. This young child was the darling of the village, but his life expectancy was very limited due to his condition. Team Enabler was able to coordinate surgery for Ahaip through an Iraqi medical clinic in Najaf and in doing so, won over the entire population of the village. The entire atmosphere and attitude of Hollandia permanently changed as a result of Team Enabler's efforts, paving the way for the ground-owning



Courtesy photo

Soldiers with Team Enabler 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment secured life-saving medical treatment for a 3-year-old Iraqi child, who was born with a birth defect.

commander to develop a relationship with the village leader that provided significant intelligence on extremist activities.

Team Enabler is not without potential drawbacks, that unless properly identified and mitigated, can cause serious problems within an AO. Team Enabler, being its own maneuver element, increases the risk of “SOI fratricide” and “broken promises” where the maneuver commander and the CAT-A team leader are not synchronized as far as promises made or desired effects. The result is a maneuver commander promising one thing and a CAT-A team leader promising another. Iraqis are quick to identify seams in the command structure, and when they do not get something from one person they will go to the other to get what they want. It is imperative that CAT-A team leaders and maneuver commanders work closely together through detailed reporting and regular meetings to achieve desired effects. Additionally, there is a risk of maneuver commanders not being completely involved in their AO because they see Team Enabler and the lines of operation that do not relate to security as “their responsibility.” In the end, conducting full spectrum operations in an AO is the maneuver commander’s responsibility, and Team Enabler is an element that supports the ground-owning commander. When correctly employed, Team Enabler is a powerful combat multiplier.

Team Enabler provides desired effects across all lines of operation that would otherwise be extremely challenging for maneuver commanders alone. The organization must be properly resourced and tied in closely with the unit’s objectives to truly be successful. The experiences of 3-1 CAV in the Mada’in Qada demonstrate that it is an organization that truly “enables” units to conduct full spectrum operations in a challenging OE.

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Lessons from the Soviet-Afghan War

DEH-KHWAJA AMBUSH

Editor’s Note: *This vignette was taken from The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War, by Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau. The vignette highlights a convoy ambush and illustrates tactics commonly used by insurgents.*

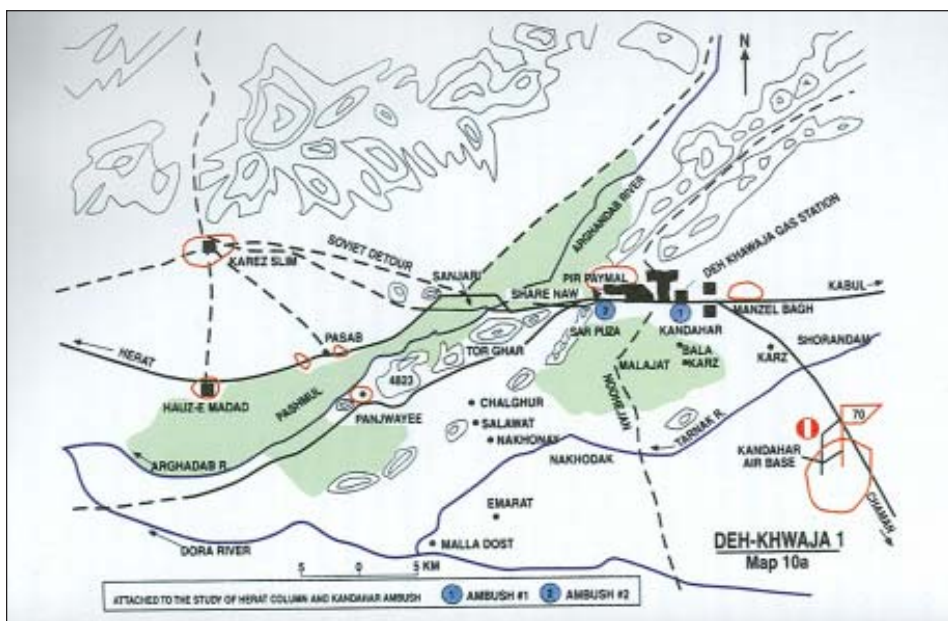
In 1982, the Soviet 70th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, supported by DRA forces, launched a block and sweep operation against the Mujahideen forces in the center of Panjwayee District. Panjwayee district is located some 25 kilometers southwest of Kandahar city. Mujahideen sources estimate that hundreds of enemy tanks, APCs (armored personnel carriers), BMPs, and other vehicles were involved in the 25-day operation. The Soviet purpose was to punish the Mujahideen groups who constantly harassed Soviet and DRA troop columns and supply convoys on the main Kandahar-Herat highway. The operation was also designed to destroy the resistance bases in the area and widen the security zone around the government-controlled district center.

The Soviet operation in Panjwayee required constant resupply from the main Soviet base located in the Kandahar air base. The supply columns had to travel along the main Chaman-Kandahar road to its junction with the Kabul-Herat highway and then proceed through Deh-Khwaja and Kandahar city to Sarpuza where the Panjwayee access road joins the main highway. (Map 1 — Deh-Khwaja 1)

The Mujahideen groups around Kandahar decided to launch a diversionary action against the enemy in order to relieve the pressure on the resistance in Panjwayee. The Mujahideen realized that the Soviets were weakest and most vulnerable along their supply route and, therefore, decided to strike them there. Although the Mujahideen could conduct small-scale ambushes along the entire stretch of the road, there were only two places suitable for large-scale ambushes. One is a two-kilometer length of road between Manzel Bagh Chawk and Deh-Khwaja. The other is a one-and-a-half kilometer stretch between Shahr-e Naw and Sarpuza.

The local Mujahideen groups in the Malajat held a council of war and decided to block the road and conduct a large-scale ambush at each site. In addition to the ambush forces, the Mujahideen also designated support groups for both ambushes to protect the flanks and rear of the blocking/ambush detachments. About 150 Mujahideen, split up into small groups, moved from the Malajat area during the night and took up positions in the orchards, buildings and ditches along the main road between the Manzel Bagh Chawk and Deh-Khwaja gas station. The back-up group for the detachment deployed south of the city. (Map 2 — Deh-Khwaja 2) A similar detachment blocked the road between Shahr-e Naw and Sarpuza.

Early in the morning, a convoy of trucks carrying ammunition, rockets



Map 1 — Deh-Khwaja 1

and gasoline moved from the Kandahar air base toward Panjwayee. As the column reached the first roadblock, the Mujahideen opened fire simultaneously with RPG-7s, machine guns, rifles and a recoilless rifle. Taken by surprise, the column stopped while the Soviet security vehicles returned fire. Their fire hit the Deh-Khwaja residential areas and caused much destruction. However, Mujahideen fire finally struck the ammunition trucks. They caught fire and hundreds of rockets and boxes of other ammunition began to explode. The explosions were so powerful that burning tires from APCs were thrown as far away as Bala Karz, some two kilometers from the ambush site. The ambush destroyed about 30 enemy supply trucks and damaged many others. The rest of the Soviet convoy turned back. The Mujahideen roadblock at Shahr-e Naw and Sarpuza had no enemy to attack.

This Mujahideen ambush had a decisive impact on the enemy operation in that it forced the Soviet forces to end their siege of Mujahideen forces in Panjwayee and return to Kandahar. However, in order to prevent future ambushes in the area, the Soviet forces bulldozed Deh-Khwaja homes along the main road out to a distance of 300 meters from the highway.

COMMENTARY: Security of the lines of communication was a constant challenge facing the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Security of the lines of communication

determined the amount of forces which the Soviets could deploy in Afghanistan and also determined the scale and frequency of offensive combat directed against the Afghan resistance forces.

In this example the Soviets had to move supplies to a large group of forces about 50 kilometers away. The road, although an all-season major highway, was vulnerable to Mujahideen ambushes at almost every point. Further, the Soviets and Mujahideen fought for control of Kandahar for the entire war. The Soviets knew that the road was not secure. And yet, the convoy commander

did little to ensure the security of the movement along the supply route. A preliminary road-clearing patrol could have preempted the Mujahideen's successful ambush. Instead, their entire operation was disrupted due to their failure to move supplies to Panjwayee.

Normally, the Soviets spaced APCs throughout the convoy as security vehicles. In case of ambush, the APCs would stop in the kill zone and return fire while the rest of the convoy caught in the kill zone would drive out of it. The portion of the convoy not under attack would stop wait for the APCs to drive off the ambushers. Then, when the ambushers had been driven off, the convoy would reform and continue. That is why the Mujahideen established two ambush zones. They did not think that they would stop the convoy at the first ambush and so the second ambush was ready to hit the Soviet convoy again.

On the other hand, it took the Mujahideen about three weeks to decide help the resistance forces in Panjwayee by hitting the Soviets elsewhere. Had they launched their attack earlier, it could have forced their enemy to terminate his operation against Mujahideen groups in Panjwayee earlier.

(Mulla Malang was one of the most famous commanders of the Kandahar area. He was an adherent of Mawlawi Mohammed Yunis Khalis-Islamic Party [Hezb-e-Islami-Kha-lis-HIK].)

Map 2 — Deh-Khwaja 2

